



# LOGOS

# EVANGELISM

## Called to Go Into the World

by The Rev. Patricia Whittington, Chair, Evangelism Committee

Often when we think about the topic of Evangelism we turn our heads, close our ears or limit our thinking to how we can just grow our own congregation. On the other hand, evangelism encompasses a full spectrum of Christian ministries. In our churches this may include ministries such as Sunday school, reaching the unchurched, outreach, feeding the homeless, etc. Evangelism also extends out into the world. The invitation to fulfill the Great Commission calls us beyond our neighborhoods to witness "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts. 1:8) God calls us to participate in and support foreign missions, and evangelize to the ends of the earth. When it comes to salvation God has no boundaries. There is no country or particular group of people more precious than any other in God's eyes. We could say that we are all foreign missionaries because this world is only our temporary home, and heaven the eternal home for believers.

As a Diocese we are not to limit ourselves by setting boundaries. God sees no boundaries, and neither should we. Each of us in the Diocese of WV are called to prayerfully live out Acts 1:8, "... and you shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the Earth." Paraphrased for our own personal reflection we may say, "You are to be my witness first in your hometown, then expand this witness to cover the state of West Virginia. You are called to be my witnesses in the United States, and keep on spreading the Gospel as far away as possible until there are no more places to go." We are called to shine the light of Jesus Christ as bright as we can. The testimony and influence of our life should be felt throughout the world. We are reminded that the lighthouse that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home!



As a participant in "A Clear Vision of One Church" held in Houston, Texas last November, I was able to witness so many shining lights in the Episcopal Church. I encountered many of the laity, clergy and bishops of the Episcopal Church from Hawaii to Virginia whose passion is centered on church planting, evangelism, discipleship, visioning, effective leadership, new programs, spiritual formation, and their deep desire to fulfill the Great Commission. Their enthusiasm, passion and energy were most contagious and inspiring! It was refreshing, encouraging and so exciting to be among this kind of excitement with other Christians.

In the Diocese of West Virginia there are many lighthouses of ministry burning bright and shining far from home. We can give thanks to God for the work that He has done and is doing through us. I also firmly believe that God has much, much more in store for us as a Diocese! I would encourage each of us, personally and corporately, to pray that we would continue to seek God's guidance for our diocese. I pray that the Lord will keep our hearts aflame with a burning desire to be a Diocese that is filled with great zeal and passion for mission and evangelism. I also pray that God will fill us with enthusiasm, passion and the power of the Holy Spirit so that we too can proclaim the truth of the Gospel and continually seek to be the brightest lights at home, so our lights will shine to the ends of the earth for Jesus Christ.

# Ten Suggestions

by The Rev. Paul Bresnahan, Rector, St. Mark's, St. Albans

It has been said by someone with a wry sense of humor that we are the church of the ten suggestions. If I may, I would like then to make 10 suggestions for Congregation Based Evangelism.

I wrote a little pamphlet about twelve years ago for Forward Movement that is now long out of print. It was at the dawn of the decade of Evangelism. Yet that little booklet is still quite valuable to me. Along the way, I've picked up some very useful "tips" that, I believe, help orient a congregation toward growth.

Here's a few "suggestions" that might be of help to you

1. **Make your church visible to the whole community.** Proclaim the Gospel in Word and Deed. Announce it from the rooftops. Let the whole world know that the people of God are being served in your area. You may run a soup kitchen, a food pantry, a literacy program, or you may be an advocate for the young or the elders of the community. Whatever the case; announce it! Call the news department, the city desk of your local paper or TV outlet and let them know that your church is a voice for the voiceless.
2. **Be visible:** open your services to the community. Do something different. Make it interesting. Share your story. God is working powerfully in every single life in this diocese. Do not hide your light under a bushel but let the whole world see it.
3. **Establish a New Member Ministry:** By that I mean become pro-active, systemic, and intentional about recruitment. I would suggest five steps for New Member Ministry.
  - Increased Visibility
  - Greeting ministry
  - Orientation period
  - Incorporation
  - Effective Apostleship
4. **Greet newcomers sensitively and effectively.** Get the phone number and address right away. Phone a visitor the day they visit your church. Don't worry about whether the priest or the laity does the job...just make sure somebody does it.
5. **Signage inside and outside.** Make sure that you can be seen easily by folks driving by your church at 35 miles per hour. Identify all rooms and floor plans throughout your church. Most of our buildings have been built in stages through the decades... make sure that you give folks a "fair chance" in finding their way around the maze that is your church building.
6. **Establish a Pastoral Care Committee.** Recruit some well-connected church members with knowledge of the congregation's "folklore". Meet Monday morning. Track out the significant pastoral contact going on in your church; and not just new comers. Track out significant developments among the sick, the shut-in and plan follow-up.
7. **Hold Newcomers' Classes frequently.** Provide classes where folks can learn about the Bible, The Prayer Book, Church History and Polity, and most importantly what it is that's going on inside them to "bring them toward the flame of Christ". Help them articulate the way that the Gospel is at work inside them.
8. **Incorporate people.** Make becoming a member easy. All that is required is that they attend and respond to their impulse toward generosity. List newcomers in the newsletter, give them Newcomer's packets with a pastoral welcome "wagon inside", invite them to consider confirmation, reception, and reaffirmation.
9. **Help people tell their story.** We need to learn how to articulate the gospel. Storytelling is as natural as breathing. There could easily be ample opportunities within every congregation through small group work (bible study, prayer groups, support groups and the like) to share faith and tell the stories.
10. **Finally use the mass media.** Use WVNews. Announce upcoming events. Give the media good stories. Make friends with reporters. Tell them what you are excited about in your church. Let your congregation become a "lightning rod" for the Holy Spirit. Remember that God has put us here to respond to human suffering and to seek for justice and peace.

So there you have it: a few suggestions. If you'd like to hear more, I'll be glad to spend time with your congregation. In the meantime may God prosper you and your work.

*Editors Note: Father Bresnahan may be reached at 304-722-4284 or by email at pbresnahan@charter.net*

## Adventures in Evangelism and Church Growth with the Saints of Luke in Charleston: 1989 - 2003 (Exerpts)

by Fr. David R. Green, D. Min., AOJN

### Introduction

#### **Making Sheep the Old-fashioned Way**

Epiphany morning, Bishop Mike called to ask if I would put together an article for the *Logos* on evangelism, in the context of what God and we have been doing at St. Luke's over the last 10 or so years. I had no sooner hung up the phone than my mind's eye wondered back to a newspaper clipping from the mid-1960s. Looking deeply into the picture it dawned on me—a little epiphany—that I had no recollection of ever hearing the word evangelism growing up in my home parish. Apparently we didn't need to engage such words and concepts in those days. Back then the economy in western Pennsylvania was like a well-oiled locomotive and the churches in the Conemaugh valley were full of attractive, vibrant folks, young and old alike. You might say we were practicing "evangelism by procreation".

### The Story

#### **Physician Heal Thyself**

If we were to become the evangelists and missionaries God was calling us to be, we need to be evangelized, in a manner of speaking. St. Luke's had the self-perception of being a warm, friendly, welcoming community. In reality, we were glad to welcome middle class, white folk like ourselves, if they happened to show up. Even then there was an awkwardness with strangers that left a subtle "members only" impression. Of course, it was considered bad form to invite friends to church. Otherwise perfectly good friendships could be ruined. Our model for ministry fundamentally had to change. We needed a new story. We needed a vision and the courage to pursue it. I took a deep breath and instituted a small group program with a handful of individuals who were open to grow together in love and service, and who were willing to intentionally pray for a new vision for the parish. The groups provided a safe place for people to get honest with one another, to exercise unconditional love, and to be shaped as lay ministers. Over a two year period a new leadership core with a vision for the ministry of all the baptized emerged from the groups, much to the chagrin of some of the old guard. Their open, loving presence in the congregation, combined with preaching and teaching a new vision for vitality and growth, slowly began to change the atmosphere on Sundays. And I mean slowly...and not without pain. (I was crucified and rose from the dead several times!) Eventually, visitors began to comment that they could "feel" peace and love, when they walked through the doors. We were becoming a community of healing and reconciliation, because we were willing to be healed and reconciled. Some got mad and left. A few tried to have me removed with Episcopal power. Those who stayed and gave up the ghost, so to speak, became good and loyal friends and helpers, in time.

### What We've Learned from the Story

#### **Evangelism: What the heck is it?**

Unfortunately, the word evangelism tends to conjure up images of crusades in football stadiums, bible-thumping televangelists, and badly produced radio and TV ads. When it comes to evangelism in Episcopal circles, there are lots of fancy definitions and heady programs and constructions floating around to ponder. Most, I opine, belong in "File 13." Like manna in the wilderness, we're not really sure what evangelism is and, frankly, we're getting a little tired of a steady diet of it. Here in our St. Luke's laboratory we have discovered that effective, creative evangelism is actually pretty simple, but not easy. We know for sure that it doesn't happen over night or without painful change and growth. In the most basic terms evangelism at St. Luke's has been happening in the context of **other in life-giving ways, and inviting those in search of such love into the experience.** That's it in a nutshell. Of course, we've tried our best to complicate things, but God keeps bringing us back to the simple equation of this three-way love. As we get closer to God, we get closer to one another and to the world. Out of such sharing comes a river of creative energy for mission and ministry.

#### **Theology Matters**

§ Evangelism is happening through us, as we root our experience in Trinitarian and Incarnational reality.

#### **Mary Comes Before Martha**

- § We've found that true vision comes from gentle listening prayer, not from board room planning sessions, where the most forcefully presented and best articulated ideas win. Prayer is at the heart of our evangelism, because evangelism is, by definition, a Spirit-directed gift.

### **Head and Heart**

- § Above and beyond everything, we seek childlike faith and understanding in our common life and mission. We didn't think our way into renewal at St. Luke's, we prayed our way in. Prayer, of course, requires the yielded mind, heart, and will. We're learning to shut up and listen. The mystical and the counter-intuitive have over and over provided the kind of healthy tension and stability we seek between the head and the heart.

### **A Niche in the Market**

- § One primary key to evangelism at St. Luke's was to embrace a specialized ministry no one else in the area was doing.  
 § Through the ministry of 8<sup>th</sup> Day/Barnabas House, Benedictine style retreats, quiet days, and programs have been reaching out to other Episcopalians, as well as friends in the ecumenical and interfaith communities, since 1995.  
 § You might say that 8<sup>th</sup> Day put us on the ecclesiastical and community maps.

### **Taking up and Letting Go**

- § Evangelism began to happen at St. Luke's when I, the clergy person, really began letting go and giving up control, and when, simultaneously, the laity began to really discover and walk boldly in their gifts for ministry.

### **Speaking of Risk...**

- § Without the willingness of the clergy, the vestry, and the congregation to take unprecedented, relatively outrageous risks with money, property and people, over the last 10 years, evangelism would not have happened at St. Luke's.  
 § The temptation was so strong to go on doing things the same old way expecting different results.

### **Artsy Schmartsy**

- § Evangelism happens when people learn of a safe place where they can be vulnerable and encouraged to grow in their creativity.  
 § At St. Luke's, one aspect of evangelism is to give folks freedom to express themselves and grow. Our Christmas play this year, written and directed by playwright and award-winning actress, Kelly D. T. Strom, was good enough to take on the road.

### **Pets and Kids**

- § We somehow figured out that, if we wanted to attract young families and children, we needed to make the church experience more user friendly and fun.

### **Expecting Miracles**

We have learned to expect miracles at St. Luke's, because we've seen miracles over and over again. Evangelism happened when a critical mass of folks in the congregation began to treat the possibility and the reality of the miraculous and the serendipitous as normal and commonplace. This gift is the fruit of contemplation, and, if nothing else, being soaked in a contemplative atmosphere leaves you scratching your head in wonder. We see physical, emotional, and spiritual healing regularly. We see money come from unexpected places at the right time. The God-incidences get so intense sometimes we think we have one foot in heaven. And, of course, we do. We all do. The bible says that the Kingdom of our Father/Mother God is among us and in us, if we will only suspend our disbelief and discover Jesus, who is waiting for us by his Spirit, in our pure, child-like, baptized hearts. Let's face it, West Virginia needs a few miracles. God is still in the miracle business, but we have to ask and believe. We've learned not to demythologize things too much at St. Luke's. The final result is experience of God, drop-dead gratitude and convincing witness. Like the friends who lowered their friend through the roof at Peter's place, evangelism happens for those who expect the impossible and persevere in the possible.

*Editors Note: The full text of **Adventures in Evangelism and Church Growth with the Saints of Luke in Charleston: 1989 - 2003** is available from either the Diocesan Office or St. Luke's Charleston.*



## Evangelism Seminar Follow-up Event

Saturday, March 1, 2003  
9:00 am—2:00 pm

St. Luke's Episcopal Church  
821 Edgewood Drive  
Charleston, WV 25302

Lunch—\$7

Register by February 22

Eighth Day Life Center has scheduled a follow-up to the recent “The Congregation’s Mission to the Unchurched” seminar. This event will focus on networking and practical implementation of evangelism strategies and is open to all those interested in evangelism, regardless of whether or not they attended the George Hunter seminar.

They would like to feature some brief presentations if anyone has helpful information or success stories to share with the group. Please let them know as soon as possible if you have any suggestions for the event, or if you would like to schedule presentation time.

Questions? Please contact Debra Jarvis, Eighth Day Life Center, 304-342-3272  
Zafiro2@aol.com

## Additional Resources

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The Evangelism Committee is eager and willing to provide support and ideas for evangelism within the Diocese. Please feel free to contact the committee members:

- ? The Rev. Patti Whittington, PO Box 508, Wheeling, WV 26003 304-233-0133, Chair
- ? Dr. Sonya Armstrong, 100 N. Faculty Circle, Dunbar, WV 25064 304-766-3390
- ? Mr. Doug Adams, 5205 Tenth Avenue, Vienna, WV 26105 304-295-4873
- ? Mr. Kip Power, 1511 Bedford Road, Charleston, WV 25314 304-342-3494
- ? The Rev. Jim Conyers, 218 Church St., Lewisburg, WV 24901 304-645-1847
- ? Mrs. Jean Jackson, 3908 Palisades Drive, Weirton, WV 26062 304-797-8478
- ? Mr. John Doughty, 1658 Lake Hills Court, Parkersburg, WV 26101 304-485-2291
- ? Ms. Debbie Short, PO Box 5400, Charleston, WV 25361 304-344-3597, Staff Support

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*For Christ and the Church*

**Bishop's Schedule in Eastern Panhandle Office**

**February 24-26, 2003**  
**March 27-28, 2003**  
**April 8-10, 2003**  
**May 7-9, 2003**  
**June 4-6, 2003**  
**October 20-22, 2003**  
**November 17-19, 2003**  
**December 16-18, 2003**

**For an appointment, contact Diocesan Office**

**Mark Your Calendars!**



**126th Annual Diocesan Convention**  
**May 2-4, 2003**  
**Flatwoods, WV**

**One Body, One Faith, One Baptism**

**Calendar**

All Soul's Chapel, Diocesan House Monday—Friday: Morning Prayer or Eucharist 8:30 AM

**February**

- 1/31-2 Nightwatch Trip to NYC
- 1 Journey to Adulthood Training, Thomas a' Becket, Morgantown 10:00 AM
- 3 Stewardship Consultants meeting, Diocesan House 10:00 AM
- 6 Legislative Evening Prayer Service, All Souls Chapel, Diocesan House 4:00 PM
- 7-9 Exploration in Ministry Conference, Jackson's Mill, Weston 7:00 PM
- 8 Peterkin Committee Meeting, Thomas a' Becket, Morgantown
- 8 EYF Council meeting, Morgantown
- 9 Visitation to Grace, Ravenswood 9:30 AM
- 16-18 Spiritual Formation Team Meeting, Sandscrest
- 17-21 Spirituality Retreat led by Sister Miriam, Sandscrest
- 20 Province III Meeting, Hagerstown, MD 10:00AM
- 22 George Washington Brunch, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Trinity, Morgantown 9:30 AM
- 23 West Virginia Day at the National Cathedral
- 23 Visitation to Grace, Middleway
- 24-26 Bishop in Eastern Panhandle Office
- 27-03/2 Happening, Christ, Fairmont
- 28-03/2 Equipping the Saints Weekend, Bishop Hodges Center, Huttonsville

**March**

- 1 Congregation's Mission to the Unchurched Follow-up, St. Luke's Charleston 9:00 AM
- 2 Visitation to Christ Clarksburg
- 3 Meeting of Lay Administrators, Diocesan House 9:30 AM
- 6-8 Diocesan Council, Sandscrest 5:00 PM
- 6-9 Lenten Retreat, Bishop Hodges, Huttonsville
- 9 Visitation to Good Shepherd, Charleston
- 9 Visitation to All Saints, South Charleston 3:00 PM
- 14-19 Spring House of Bishops Meeting, Kanuga
- 20-22 Standing Committee,/Commission on Ministry Meeting, Sandscrest
- 23 Visitation to St. Matthew's Wheeling
- 27-28 Bishop in Eastern Panhandle Office
- 28-30 Province III Youth Network Meeting
- 29 Ordination of Sister Julian Hope, Trinity Martinsburg 11:00 AM
- 30 Visitation to Trinity Martinsburg

**Clergy Don't forget!**

**PLANNING FOR TOMORROW CONFERENCE**  
**April 4-5, 2003 Days Inn, Flatwoods**